

That is a mandate from the Federal Government to the States to register voters.

In the law, the Federal Government may choose to assist people to register to vote if the State requests NVRA designation and the agency accepts.

Immediately after the legislation was passed, then-President Clinton issued Executive Order 12926—which has not been rescinded by the current administration. That Executive order calls on all Federal agencies, “to the greatest extent practicable” to provide both voter registration information, and voter registration forms.

Some might claim that this legislation is premature—that under the scheme of the act, the State must request the Federal Government’s involvement. Well, that has already occurred.

Several States, including my home State of California, under the leadership of Secretary Bowen, have asked that the VA designate the facilities within their States.

All three have been refused by this Department.

Ten secretaries of State—from both parties—have requested that the VA reverse its directive. Still no change.

In the case of Connecticut, secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz defied the VA’s directive and attempted to gain entry to the West Haven VA facility.

There, she intended on providing nonpartisan voter registration services, as well as showing veterans how to use the new disabled-access voting systems.

Guess what. She was turned away at the door because of this new directive.

As she was standing outside the door to the VA facility, she met a 91-year-old gentleman, a veteran of World War II. Secretary Bysiewicz asked him if he would like to be registered to vote, and he said that he would.

After registering, he made the comment that “I wanted to do this last year—but there was no-one there to help me.” That is wholly unacceptable.

When we hear of why so many veterans express pride in their service and their sacrifice, we hear the phrase “protecting the American way of life” again and again.

At the cornerstone of our democracy is that every eligible citizen should be registered and receive their chance to cast their vote.

After many months of trying to work out a meaningful solution with the Department, I believe it is time the VA provides veterans the support they deserve to register, cast their vote, and have that vote counted.

This is why we are introduced the Veteran Voting Support Act of 2008. This legislation would: Require the VA to make voter registration services available at VA facilities in states that request it, in accordance with the National Voter Registration Act. These services include voter registration forms, answers to questions on registration issues and assistance with

submitting voter registration forms. Those services are available to veterans using VA facilities.

Require the VA to assist veterans at facilities to receive and fill out absentee ballots if they choose to vote by absentee.

Allow nonpartisan groups and election officials to provide nonpartisan voter information and registration services to veterans.

Require an annual report to Congress from the Department of Veterans Affairs on progress related to this legislation.

I hope that my colleagues are willing to support this effort to reverse an overly bureaucratic and irrational burden at the VA.

Passage of this bill would recognize the long history in our country of nonpartisan and civil rights groups that have helped register those who have the greatest need for assistance.

And it respects election officials have long worked to register all eligible voters and provide them with the information and tools to cast a ballot.

I hope my colleagues join me in supporting S. 3308, the Veterans Voting Support Act of 2008.

VETERANS PRIVACY AND DATA SECURITY

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, technology continues to affect both the strengths and the vulnerabilities of Government. Advances over the past decades in computer technology have enabled us to generate and access unprecedented amounts of data, and make information easily accessible to citizens as well as Government employees seeking to assist them. Technology allows information to travel from one coast to the other in the blink of an eye, offering the possibility that as technology improves so will the efficiency of Government.

Unfortunately, the possibilities of the information age include an increased risk of data theft. According to the Identity Theft Resource Center, identity theft is the fastest growing crime in America. As we learned in 2006 with the theft of a Department of Veterans Affairs’ laptop, which put into question the security of the personal information of 26.5 million veterans, neither Government Departments nor the people who rely on them are immune to these new and changing risks.

In response to the VA computer theft, I, along with a number of my colleagues in the Senate and the House, requested the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study to determine whether existing privacy laws and guidance were adequate to protect the Federal Government’s collection and use of personal information. Last month, GAO reported back to Congress, and recommended we consider revising existing Federal privacy laws. Following a June 18, 2008, Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing on this and

other matters related to privacy security, I joined committee Chairman JOE LIEBERMAN and Ranking Member SUSAN COLLINS in calling for changes to modernize the Privacy Act.

The Privacy Act of 1974 is the foundation of the Federal Government’s privacy protection law. While this act provides a worthwhile basis for the protection of privacy, it was written in a different time when the Government faced different challenges. Mr. President, 1974 does not seem that long ago, but it was well before the emergence of many computer technologies that have changed the demands of data security. At that time, Bill Gates and Steve Jobs were unknown, Apple and Microsoft were little more than ideas, and neither laptops nor the Internet were part of the common American experience. The technological changes that have occurred since 1974, while bringing new opportunities, have also brought new challenges to the security of our privacy and safety of the personal information that is kept by the Federal Government. As technology changes, we need to continue to adapt the framework of Federal data security laws, as we began to do in 2002 with the E-Government Act.

As chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, I know the Department of Veterans Affairs still has a long way to go towards establishing and securing the personal information of veterans. VA and several other Departments received an “F” on this year’s Federal Information Security Management Act—FISMA—report card. I do not doubt that VA recognizes this is a problem, and I am pleased by the Department’s recent move to streamline its information technology management structure. Still, good intentions provide little comfort or security to a veteran whose identity is potentially placed at risk because VA failed to put adequate policies and procedures in place to protect personal information. I expect VA to rapidly take the steps necessary to achieve a passing FISMA grade, so that veterans can have confidence in the Department’s ability to protect their personal information. Technology should serve its intended purpose of helping, not harming, those who rely on the efficiencies it provides. I also look forward to Congress taking action to create privacy laws which meet the demands of 21st century technology.

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF INTEGRATION OF THE ARMED FORCES

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, today we recognize the 60th anniversary of one of the momentous steps forward for equality of opportunity in our Nation’s history. On July 26, 1948, President Harry Truman, signed Executive Order 9981. That order read, in part:

there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.

While equality, as a concept, is deeply rooted in our Nation's founding, equality in practice was exceedingly rare in our Nation's armed services before President Truman's action. His order reversed nearly 175 years of discrimination, segregation, and exclusion from the armed services based on race, dating back to the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War.

The order benefited the armed services as well as the countless men and women—of all races—who have subsequently served in integrated units. Further, the diversity of our service-members has contributed to its being the most capable, strongest military force that the world has ever known.

In an amicus brief for the U.S. Supreme Court, former officers of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps as well as civilian leaders and former Secretaries of Defense agreed that integration of the military was the result of "a principled recognition that segregation is unjust and incompatible with American values," and further that the military's "efficient, effective deployment required integration."

While we all appreciate President Truman's action today, appreciation was not always widespread. The integration order was met with criticism from many who were accustomed to segregation. And, as 1948 was an election year—Truman's first, after he succeeded President Roosevelt many felt that Truman was all but giving away the election by fracturing his party. The doubters and critics make Truman's steadfastness all the more noteworthy.

In the decades that followed 1948, the civil rights movement pushed the entire Nation to make enormous strides towards ending segregation and integrating everything from schools to neighborhoods.

From the Emancipation Proclamation, to the integration of the armed services, to *Brown v. Board of Education*, to the Civil Rights Acts, progress towards racial equality in America has marched forward unceasingly. The integration of the armed services was one of the enormous and critical steps in that march.

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, In mid-June, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, numbering over 1,000, are heartbreaking and touching. To respect their efforts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through energy_prices@crapo.senate.gov to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. This is not an issue that will be easily resolved, but it is one that deserves immediate and serious attention, and Idahoans deserve to be heard. Their stories not only detail their struggles to meet everyday expenses, but also have

suggestions and recommendations as to what Congress can do now to tackle this problem and find solutions that last beyond today. I ask unanimous consent that today's letters be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Thank you for your excellent newsletter and for listening to your constituency. My story is as follows: We live in Horseshoe Bend and I commute to Boise every day (M-F) for work. We have a large family, and my wife constantly has a need to take our van in to Boise for various family needs—medical, sports, clothing, etc. My income has not kept up with the rising gas prices, and it has made things very difficult. I cannot get my work to let me telecommute; I have chosen to drive a practical car, as economical as possible (Toyota Corolla). My wife has tried to cut back her trips to town to one or two days a week. This has often resulted in no groceries in the house until she can make a run, or I can run after work and miss family time at night. My oldest son, who just turned 18, has started working in Boise the past few months and, since he cannot afford the gas back and forth, has been staying with friends as much as possible, which has been stressful to both my wife and I, but having a job is important to him. Even with all of our cutting back, our family has to cough up about \$400/month just for fuel and the costs keep going up. We want Congress to quickly move to begin developing our own fuel sources within the U.S., as well as find ways to make alternative sources (like solar, etc.) much more affordable for households to implement into our lifestyles.

Thanks for listening!

JONATHAN, *Horseshoe Bend*.

We (my wife and I) are probably some of the fortunate few that had the ability, even though we will be paying for it for years) to convert from "oil" heat to natural gas with a heat pump. This cost came at a very large price. We had been helping our son, an honors student, with his college at Eastern Washington, and now cannot do that due to having the above mentioned bill to pay in addition to trying to stay above selling out our home due to ever increasing costs that a couple on retirement (I am a retired agent law enforcement, 25 year career) just cannot afford.

[We ask that Congress] get a grip on this problem. I, for one, do not believe that this was just an unfortunate set of circumstances, [as it seems that businesses with oil interests are benefitting tremendously from the profits these high prices have created.]

DENNIS and SANDY.

Thank you for your interest in the thoughts from Idaho citizens about the high fuel costs. I think that if a person is still breathing, they are being affected by these price increases. In our own family, we have made every effort to cut down on our driving and making sure we combine our activities to conserve. Maybe these are things we should have been doing all along and I hope we continue to do. This year we have decided to not take a family vacation because of the high costs associated with traveling with a large family and having to drive a large vehicle to accommodate all eight of us. We also love to waterski and were planning on buying a new boat; however, that, too, has been put on hold because it would be too expensive to use it enough to warrant the purchase price.

I see the biggest concern in our family with our two oldest children who are raised and on their own. One has graduated with a Master's degree in business and has chosen a teaching profession, but she can barely make ends meet as it is. Now, with the cost of fuel, she may lose her small, modest home or be forced to take on a roommate in order to make up the difference in the gas prices. Our other adult child is working full time and going to school part time because he needs the extra income to pay for fuel. This is affecting my husband and me; however, I see it affecting the next generation even more. The high cost of housing combined with the high fuel costs and grocery costs is making it impossible for many of them to just get by, let alone put any money away in savings.

I wish I had all the answers, but I do not. I am trusting in good people like you that I have voted for to help us as a nation get back on our feet. Thank you for all you do. Please keep listening to the citizens of Idaho. I know if we work together then we can make positive changes for all of our futures.

Sincerely,

JACKIE, *Rigby*.

I do not have a story to share. I just want to let you know that I think increased drilling and refining should be down the priority list. That is living in the past and pretending the future will be different. It will not. In order to protect the air that supports us, we should ride the horses of alternative energy, efficiency, conservation and nuclear energy.

Thank you,

ROGER, *Hailey*.

Higher fuel costs equate to higher food and material costs which translate to a smaller disposable income for everyone. It is like we all took a big cut in pay! I do not want our country to end up as a gilded "third-world" nation with meaningless currency. There is a person out there who made an important clip on YouTube that every American should see: YouTube—Joe, American Challenges the Presidential Candidates—as this individual makes some valid points and offers some course of solution to deal with our oil dependency on countries who do not really like us except for our money. Please watch it. Thanks.

HOWARD.

I personally am appalled at the prices and how steadily they have risen. I understand that there are some things such as inflation and supply and demand; yet, what the oil industry is doing falls under neither category. It, instead, is falling under the category of monopoly, which I feel the government has yet to do anything about. A few things I would like to see in honest:

(1) Either for the government to stop subsidizing crude oil and gasoline, and/or for a ceiling to be put upon profits brought in. They claim, noting again, that it is supply and demand, as well as problems in the Middle East. Only approximately 20%, in a recent study, of our oil usage comes from there, anyway. So why are the prices so high?

(2) Stop the push for attempts at subsidizing and pushing for nuclear energies as there is an overwhelming stance against them and you will never be able to pass anything soon enough to fix the problem at hand. Also, in this category, I feel that it is a pointless endeavor as there is no place to place the waste [other than on site, and the citizens of Idaho, and other states, will not stand for mere on-site storage]. Yucca Mountain has no chance of opening in any point in the near future [even if possible, it is already filled over capacity from open plants at the